

# ALASKA TELEHEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

*"Promoting Telehealth  
Efforts in Alaska"*



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- The **Clinical Providers Workgroup** meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 12:45 p.m. The workgroup will meet again on December 23rd.
- The **Reimbursement Workgroup** meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 9:30 a.m. The workgroup will meet again on December 27th.
- The **Technical Standards Workgroup** meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. The workgroup will meet again on December 15th.
- The **Telepsychiatry Workgroup** meets on the first and third Thursday of each month at 12:30 p.m. The workgroup will meet again on December 16th.
- The **ATAC quarterly meeting** is scheduled to be held on January 7th, 2000, from 9:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., at GCI in the Denali Towers building, 2550 Denali Street, 16th Floor.

## NEWSLETTER

*Issue 1  
November 1999*



## Next Council Meeting

**Report from Facilitator Tom Nighswander, MD, MPH**

Since the Alaska Telehealth Advisory Council (ATAC) meetings have been spaced farther apart (the next meeting is scheduled to be held on Friday, January 7th, 2000, at GCI in the Denali Towers building), council staff decided to give members, participants, and interested parties a brief update of what has been happening with the suggestions expressed at the October 10-11, 1999 meeting. The workgroups have been meeting regularly and workgroup membership is listed on page two of this newsletter. The meetings are open and everyone is welcome to attend either in person or via the telephone.

A future potential project is a survey of the non-federal parts of the state to evaluate what is available locally for telehealth applications and what would be needed to make it possible for a community to be connected to a telehealth system. Before pursuing this idea, which was first suggested at the last council meeting, Dr. Thomas Nighswander contacted Senator Ted Stevens' office. Senator Steven's office indicated that they would be interested in such information. During the week of November 29th, Dr. Nighswander met with a potential local contractor and a staff person with the Alaska Federal Health Care Access Network (AFHCAN) project who conceived the original survey for the federal sites.

Council staff have been very busy since the last meeting and good progress has been made. For any questions, please feel free to contact:

**Dr. Thomas Nighswander**

Facilitator

(907) 729-3682

[tnighswa@anthc.org](mailto:tnighswa@anthc.org)

**Karen M. Mitchell**

ANTHC Support Staff

(907) 729-1915

[kmmitchell@anthc.org](mailto:kmmitchell@anthc.org)



**For more information, visit the website:  
[www.hss.state.ak.us/atac](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/atac)**

# ALASKA TELEHEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Workgroup Updates

### WORKGROUP MEMBERSHIP

#### Clinical Providers:

Dr. Jerome List, Alaska State Medical Association, 261-3096

Dr. Leslie Bryant, 261-3162

Debbie Kiley, NP, 261-3096

Annette Siemens, Chugachmiut-North Star Health Clinic, 224-3076

Dr. Peter Ehrnstrom, Elmendorf Hospital, 580-2520

Dr. Owen Hanley, Fairbanks, 456-3750

Dr. Richard Burger, Fairbanks, 452-6610

William Applebee, Community Health Foundation, 360-1461

Dr. Kevin Stange, ANMC, 729-2701

Joe Klejka, YKHC, 543-6028

#### Legal:

Tim Schuerch, ANTHC, 729-1908

#### Reimbursement:

Carrie Irwin, AFHCAN, 729-2264

Teri Keklak, State of Alaska, Div. of Medical Assistance, 561-2171

Gwen Obermiller, ANMC, 729-1964

Destyne Taft, Providence Health Systems, 261-5652

Marijo Toner, Bartlett Memorial Hospital, 586-8488

Dr. Peter West, Premera Blue Cross, (425) 670-4760

#### Technical:

William Applebee, Community Health Foundation, 360-1461

Terry Daniels, Providence Health Systems, 261-5066

Kathy Fanning, Technology Management Service, 257-5426

Stewart Ferguson, AFHCAN, 729-2262

Doug LaMarche, AT&T Alascom, 264-7316

Steven Menzies, DOD, 580-3094

Leigh Thurston, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, 458-5465

Marijo Toner, Bartlett Memorial Hospital, 586-8488

#### Telepsychiatry:

Commissioner Karen Perdue, State of Alaska, 465-3030

Jeff Jessee, Alaska Mental Health Trust, 269-7963

Dr. Vern Stillner, Bartlett Outpatient Services, 586-8498

William Worrall, Department of Corrections, 269-7319

Dr. Ron Adler, Gateway Mental Health, 225-4135, ext. 33

Wandal Winn, Priv. Prac., 562-0794

Roger Schaeffer, 257-4857

Dr. John Battaglia, API, 269-7100

Dr. Jay Collier, ANMC, 729-2500

Mike Terry, AFHCAN, 729-2263

Karl Brimmer

The **Technical Standards** workgroup, representing all the major players in the state, has been meeting every two weeks and will prepare a draft set of statewide standards for presentation at the January meeting. This workgroup has made very good progress with relatively easy agreement after some lively and interesting debate. The workgroup members have used common sense and looked to the future to anticipate needs.

The **Reimbursement** workgroup, which includes both a Medicaid and private insurance carrier, have had productive meetings. Current work in progress includes: the state Medicaid office will request from ATAC staff, support to research nationally the Medicaid standards for reimbursement around the country, and the required changes in regulation and policy in Alaska to allow for telehealth reimbursement. The state Medicaid leadership is committed to reimbursement for this service when it adds value to providing health care. To obtain more information on value-added clinical encounters using telehealth applications, a proposed evaluation focused on reimbursement is being developed for the communities of Kodiak, Seward, and Talkeetna. This is being done in cooperation with Premera Blue Cross/Blue Shield, with advice from the state Medicaid office. The proposal will evaluate questions such as increased availability to access to care, the effect on transportation costs, and patient and pro-

vider satisfaction.

The **Clinical Provider** workgroup consists of both public and private clinical providers, which includes physicians and mid-level practitioners. The focus of the workgroup is to promote the use of telehealth applications in the clinical community. To date there have been two meetings and several projects have been discussed, but no action has been taken yet.

The **Telepsychiatry** workgroup is a newly formed subcommittee due to the expressed interest by the State Department of Health & Human Services, Alaska Mental Health Trust, and several active tele-

health psychiatrists who are currently utilizing this technology. The workgroup has been addressing standards for telepsychiatry use in our state, including evaluation of several ongoing projects. There is a working draft paper of both the background for some of the issues unique to this clinical specialty and proposed recommendations for its use and reimbursement services.

